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SUBJECT: SENATORS MCCASKILL AND CARPER MEETING WITH DEPUTY  
PRIME MINISTER BARHAM SALEH

Classified By: AMBASSADOR RYAN C. CROCKER FOR REASONS 1.5 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY: On June 16, 2007, Senators Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.) and Thomas Carper (D-Del.), Lieutenant General Ann Dunwoody, Deputy Chief of Staff G-4 (Logistics), and Patrick Fitzgerald, Auditor General of the Army, met with Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh (DPM). While the group discussed a variety of issues, much of the discussion involved the status of Iraq,s efforts to achieve stability and the level and length of the United States, commitment in Iraq.

¶1. Sen. McCaskill first inquired about the DPM,s perspective of the American public,s frustration with progress toward stability in Iraq. The DPM responded that when he first returned to Iraq, he was shocked at the level of devastation he observed after thirty-five years of neglect and Saddam,s rule. He stated that reconstruction and reconciliation in Iraq is being "burdened" by a "sea of change" in the region as it deals with terrorism and radical Islamic forces. He also stated that Iraq is subject to the dynamics of other countries, including the internal dynamics of the United States.

¶2. The DPM observed that U.S. forces under General Petraeus were doing a good job and he was seeing significant changes in Baghdad. He, however, recognized that the "Surge" can not be sustained in the long-term, but needed to last long enough to allow political remedies to take hold. The DPM stated that these remedies had to include strategic, collective leadership that involves Sunni interests.

¶3. The DPM stated that the Government of Iraq (GoI) was working hard to pass certain "bench mark" legislation including the Hydrocarbon and De-Baath'ification Laws. He observed that such major pieces of legislation would take many months to complete in the United States. He also observed that Iraq had been working on the Hydrocarbon law for six month and that the De-Baath'ification law was still being drafted.

¶4. The DPM stated that the current effort in Iraq could not be allowed to fail; that just after returning from a visit to Iran, he recognized that Iraq is where the "new Middle East" begins. He observed that the battle in Iraq is a struggle between radical Islam and those who want to live in a peaceful society. In his opinion, the struggle was a "generational" struggle very much like the Cold War. He also stated that al-Qaeda was not an isolated phenomenon, that it was a "unique problem in an interconnected world." The DPM also stated that, while he understood America,s frustration, the battle for Iraq was a battle that could not be lost. The DPM stated that Iraq needed long-term and sustainable American help, and that if milestones were missed, America could not just leave.

¶5. Sen. McCaskill asked if there were individuals in the Iraqi Government who wanted to see the government fail. The

DPM responded by stating that there were those who had their own agenda and wanted more power, but that the challenge was to arrive at a power-sharing arrangement. He observed that, last year when the al-Askari shrine was bombed in Sammara, there were many problems, but that there were very few problems as a result of the most recent bombing of the same mosque.

¶6. Sen. Carper asked if there were "problem areas" where the USG could place "constructive pressure?" The DPM stated financial support for Iraq should require that Iraq be accountable for the expenditure of those funds. Sen. Carper also stated that America did not want to "police a civil war."

¶7. Sen. McCaskill asked if it were true that the Iraqi people wanted the Americans to leave. The DPM responded by stating that, while no one wants foreign troops to occupy Iraq, every key political Iraqi political leader except Moqtada al-Sadr, wanted the Coalition Forces to stay. He observed that while Iraqis in the south of the country are "uncomfortable" with Americans, they recognized the need for an American presence in order to have freedom.

¶8. Sen. McCaskill observed that even Iraqi newspapers and media do not publish good news stories, making it difficult for the American public to see a benefit to America,s part in the conflict. The DPM observed that this was part of a free society, that American news media also do not publish good new stories.

¶9. Sen. McCaskill asked the DPM,s opinion about a dialogue with Syria and Iran. The DPM stated that Iran is very patient, that Syria is a "bad actor" and that we needed to get Syria "off the backs of Lebanon and Iraq." He also stated that America should not reward bad behavior by those

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countries.

¶10. CODEL McCaskill did not have an opportunity to clear this cable.  
CROCKER